

the world look to America for hope and for inspiration. We can't be everywhere, and we can't do everything. But where we can make a difference and where our values and interests are at stake, we must act. That was the case in Haiti. You acted and acted well, above and beyond the call of duty.

I congratulate you on your tremendous achievement. I thank you for a job well done. Your Nation is grateful and proud.

God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. on the parade ground. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Secretary of Defense John P. White; Gen. John J. Sheehan, USMC, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command; Gen. John H. Tilelli, Jr., USA, Army Vice Chief of Staff; Gen. Henry H. Shelton, USAF, Commander in Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command; Adm. Paul D. Miller, USN (Ret.); Brig. Gen. Michael B. Sherfield, USA, Commander, Joint Readiness Training Center; Command Sgt. Maj. Johnny Austin, Joint Readiness Training Center; and Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Laye, U.S. Atlantic Command.

Remarks to the Community in Alexandria, Louisiana March 18, 1996

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for waiting in the cold and the wind. I am so glad to be here. I want to thank the Tioga High School band for playing. Didn't they do a great job? *[Applause]* Mayor Randolph, Mayor Baden, Senator Johnston, Senator Breaux, Congressman Fields, Congressman Jefferson, Chairman Meyer, I am delighted to be here, and I thank you for waiting for me.

I want to talk just a minute, very briefly, about what you have done here with England Air Force Base and why that's a model of what I hope we'll see more of all across America. You know, when the cold war ended and we were moving into this global economy, the first thing that happened that scared a lot of Americans was the need to downsize the military and the plain need that the country had to reduce the size of our bases. A lot of people were afraid, but you people were not afraid. You worked together, and you were determined to make some good things happen here. And I have to tell you that I have been all over this country looking at military bases. I have worked with communities all over America, personally, to help them start their communities up and to use these bases as economic assets. There is no place in the entire United States that has done a better job than Alexandria has.

Now, what I want to say, even in all this wind, is that there are other challenges facing us. You read in the press, I'm sure, that some big companies, for example, are restructuring

and laying off a lot of people. All the time in this economy there are jobs being created, jobs being abolished, jobs being created, jobs being abolished. But what I want to say to you is that this country is moving in the right direction. We have 8.4 million more jobs today than we had 3 years ago because the American people, when they work together, can find ways to solve problems, meet challenges, and move forward. And if we will commit ourselves to a few simple things, educating all of our children and providing education for adults whenever they lose jobs, the moment they lose jobs; making the most of our resources; selling America's products around the world; and taking the things we have in this country, like these military bases, and turning them into opportunities; and if we will commit to say if a person loses a job they at least ought to be able to carry their health insurance and their pension with them so they can take care of their families when they start anew; if we will commit ourselves to making it possible for people to start small businesses and for every community in America to participate in the economic recovery, then this country is going to do just fine.

I want you to know, when I became President, because I had been through a base closing in my home State, I started a whole new program to get the Pentagon to move more quickly, to move properties out and give them to the communities so that they could be used to generate jobs. And that is what we have done now

all across America, and we're using you as a model.

Now let me say that there's one official reason we're all out here on this windy day, and that is that I am here to take the next step in the official transition of this Air Force base to the central Louisiana community by formally presenting the deed for 165 acres of the base to Jim Meyer. So I'd like to ask him to come up here and let me present the deed. Mr. Meyer?

Here it is. It is now yours.

Mr. Meyer. Thank you.

The President. Thank you again. God bless you. It's great to see you. I've had a great day. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the England Air Park. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Ned Randolph of Alexandria; Mayor Fred Baden of Pineville; and Jim Meyer, chairman, England Economic and Industrial Development District.

Remarks on the 1997 Budget and an Exchange With Reporters *March 19, 1996*

The President. I need a lot of help today. [Laughter] Please be seated.

Good afternoon. Today I am presenting to Congress and the American people my budget for fiscal year 1997. This detailed budget plan invests in our people and balances the budget in 7 years.

The budget continues the economic strategy that I put in place when I took office of President. Three years ago our economy was drifting and our deficit was exploding. In the 12 years before I became President the deficit had skyrocketed and the national debt had quadrupled. I was determined that our Nation must change course and once again provide growth and opportunity for the American people. So we cut the deficit. We invested in education and training. We opened foreign markets to our goods and services through tough trade agreements. We shrank and reformed our Government so that it now has the smallest work force in 30 years but is still capable of performing essential functions necessary to the well-being and the growth of the American people.

The American economy has turned around. It is now poised for sustained growth. Thanks to the ingenuity and hard work of the American people, our Nation has created 8.4 million jobs. We have the lowest combined rate of unemployment, inflation, and home mortgage rates in 27 years. Exports are up dramatically, to an all-time high. Key industries from autos to semiconductors once again lead the world. And just yesterday the World Economic Forum said that

for the third year in a row the American economy was the world's most productive. In addition to that, it's worth noting that in the last couple of years wages have started rising for the first time in a decade. And as compared with 4 years ago, when only 20 percent of the new jobs paid above average wages, in 1995 over 55 percent of the new jobs paid above average wages.

But there is more to do. We must press on. The most important thing we can do to keep our economy growing is to finish the job of balancing the budget in a way that reflects our values. In 1992 I pledged to cut the deficit in half and to continue cutting it after that. We are cutting the deficit in half. I'm proud to say that my 1997 budget is the first budget presented by a President of either party in nearly two decades to come to balance using the numbers of both Congress and the executive branch.

It cuts unnecessary spending in hundreds of Government programs. It reforms welfare, putting in place a system that ends welfare as we know it and moves more people from welfare to work. It honors our values by protecting Medicare and Medicaid and investing in our future through education and the environment. It closes corporate loopholes and cuts taxes for working families and small businesses. Most important, this is the second year of the plan I presented to the American people to balance the budget in 7 years. This budget underscores my personal determination; we will balance the